

[Pioneer Reminiscences and Incidents]

W1224

/Beliefs & Customs [?] Folklore

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Title Pioneer reminiscences and incidents

Place of origin Portland, Ore Date 2/2/39

Project worker Sarah B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks L Reminiscences

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

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Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sarah B. Wrenn Date February 2, 1939.

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Reminiscences and Incidents.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Annie Cason Lee Upper Drive, Lake Grove, Oswego, Oregon

Date and time of interview January 31, 1939 — 2:00 to 3:00 P. M.

Place of interview Home of informant.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Neighbor of interviewer.

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Small country home, overlooking Lake Oswego. The room in which the interview took place was the living room, which was comfortably though not luxuriously furnished. The floor was covered with linoleum, and the room was heated by a circulating heater of small type. There was an overstuffed davenport and several overstuffed chairs, with a couple of floor lamps. The garden was somewhat run-down, owing to the ill health of the owner.

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Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 2, 1939.

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Pioneer Reminiscences and Incidents.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Annie [?] Lee Upper Drive, Lake Grove, Oswego, Oregon.

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests

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8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant

10. Other points gained in interview

1. Scotch, English and French.

2. Portland, Oregon, December 12, 1870.

3. Father, Hilary Cason; Mother, Delilah Enminger Cason.

4. Portland from birth until present date.

5. Public Schools; Willamette University, Salem, Oregon.

6. Housewife.

7. No special skill in anything; average interest in general matters of national and community importance.

8. Community garden club and society. Member of Christian Science Church.

9. Short, and dark in coloring, with dark gray hair. Somewhat commonplace in appearance, though cordial. Neatly dressed.

10. Cooperative, and willing to give information, but apparently unable to understand the nature of material desired. Mrs. Lee's husband, a retired businessman, who was present, was more understanding and very helpful.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

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Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 2, 1939.

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Pioneer Reminiscences and Incidents, etc.

Name and address of informant Mrs. Annie Cason Lee Upper Drive, Lake Grove, Oswego, Oregon.

Text:

My parents, who crossed the plains to Oregon in 1853, were originally from Kentucky. They then had five children, of which one was my sister Miranda. She was a very beautiful girl, quite young, I think not more than fifteen. I remember hearing them tell (There were twelve of us and I was one of the younger ones — born in Oregon) of an outstanding incident of their trip, in the Snake river country. The Indians, while not yet utterly hostile, were not very friendly, with tactics that harassed and worried the emigrants considerably. Every once in a while a bunch of mounted braves would bear down upon the train and demand tribute of anything that took their fancy. It seemed my father had a specially good knife of the hunting or skinning variety. He had this knife in his hands, doing something with it, when one of the Indians, a chief, or at least the leader of his gang, reached down and snatched it out of his hands. Of course there was nothing the white men could do under such circumstances, but, as the saying now is, grin and take it. In that case, however, it was the Indian who took. Then the Indians caught a glimpse of this pretty sister of mine. They 2 decided they wanted her too. They offered to buy her, however, and it took

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a lot of diplomacy and tact to get out of a most unpleasant situation, and from that time on whenever Indians came in sight, Miranda was hidden down in a little hole they arranged for her, in the bottom of the wagon. As you can imagine, such a way of hiding was far from comfortable for Miranda at times. It was when they were fording the Snake River that mother and the children had a terrifying experience, that, looking back at it from today, seems strange. They reached the fording place late in the day, and, owing to the near by annoying Indians, were anxious to get on the other side without delay. When the wagons crossed — the women and children being floated across in wagon boxes, made water-proof for that purpose — mother and her children were left on the bank, to be carried over later. In the crossing there was trouble with the stock, and other things of an unforeseen nature happened, and before it was realized darkness had settled down — and there was mother and her little folk, with no food and no protection from the cold, and unfriendly Indians lurking in the background. To attempt to cross the river, cold and swift as it was, in the darkness, was suicide. There was nothing to do but wait till morning, with what feelings may be imagined. Mother always said it was nothing but her trust in God that helped her live through that awful night, as the children and she crowded close together for warmth and comfort, in a silence that formed their only protection from the redskins. At the break of day, of course, they were rescued.

It was late in the autumn when they arrived in Portland, where they camped on what is now the block just north of the civic auditorium.

Father was a stone mason. He took up a donation land claim in what is now Montavilla, one of his boundary lines running east for a mile along the Base Line, and then one mile north.

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Father and mother were both very religious, but they were Southerners and they, or at least father had the fiery southern temper. Mother was a charter member of the Centenary Methodist church on East Stark, which was organized at our home at East Sixth and

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Pine streets. This recalls a story that father never liked very much being reminded of, but the family always, in after years, got quite a laugh out of it. The incident occurred sometime after the Stark Street ferry was in operation under Captain Foster, who was quite a friend of father's. Father, with one of my older sisters was going over to the Taylor Street Methodist Church. They were descending the ferry slip, and were all ready to step aboard the ferry, when the boat pulled out suddenly, leaving them standing there — and already late for church. Father was furious. He was short and thick-set, with a bull-like neck, and when he was mad he was awful mad. He shook his fist at Captain Foster, up in the pilot-house, and, I guess, Captain Foster must have laughed, for when he returned to the east bank, father was madder than ever and didn't hesitate to let the world know. The man exchanged ugly words, and one thing led to another, until finally they were at it, hammer and tongs. Foster tried to stick his thumb in father's eye, in good old frontier-fight fashion, and father grabbed the thumb in his mouth and bit it nearly off. By this time there was a big bunch of spectators, and of course they interfered and separated the two men, and Father, still sputtering, finally returned home, all torn and bloody, and far from looking the respectable, Christian church attendant who had left the house an hour or so earlier. You'd have thought those two men would have been enemies ever after, but they weren't. The next morning, when father boarded the ferry, he said "Hello, Cap", and Captain Foster grinned and responded, "Hello, Cas", and that was the end of it.

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Father never drank, but he came of a race of drinking men, and he must have liked the taste of liquor. Anyway he was afraid of it. During his life-time he always kept a diary. There were a lot of these in mother's possession after his death. If I had them I could give you a priceless store of folklore and anecdotes, but mother made me promise to burn them at her death and I did. I think one reason she wanted them destroyed was father's frequent allusion to being tempted of the devil. Over and over again this entry occurred, "Tempted of the devil today." Once, when he was custodian of a warehouse where liquor was stored, the odor was almost too much for him, so I have been told, and he got down on his knees

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and prayed for strength to resist the temptation. Well, since he did resist, I think those entries, "Tempted of the devil today," are something to be proud of, and I've sometimes been sorry I destroyed the diaries.